H.M.A.S. Napier

By Tom Chapman. HO PO RM

Early during WW2, eight “N” class destroyers were built in the UK, and 5 of these were manned mainly by R.A.N. personnel. Most of these ships were fitted with surface warning and gun fire control Radars. Photographs of the time show a mast top aerial and a 285 type aerial above the visual rangefinder.

In the 1944-45 period, *Napier* had a type 271 Radar fitted. This was a 10 centimetre surface warning Radar and it replaced the visual rangefinder. The Radar office was abaft the director and had a timber and perspex dome above. This dome housed two aerials and the transmitter. Aerial rotation was via a drive shaft manually controlled by the Radar operator through 360 degrees with a slight overlap astern. The display was an “A” scan, and this together with two operators completely filled the Radar office. Details of echos were passed to the bridge by voicepipe or by phone. A small office two decks below housed the L17 panel accurate range measurer. From here, ranges were passed verbally to the Gunners Mate by phone for the purpose of fire control.

As well in this period 1944-45, *Napier* had a type 291 combined surface and air warning Radar. The antenna was at the top of the foremast, and was hand driven by a Bowden cable under the control of the Radar operator. Display was an “A” scope and was located with the remainder of the 291 equipment in an office off the flag deck. This set was linked to the L17 if accurate ranges were needed. Contact with the bridge was all verbal by voicepipe or phone. In this office off the flag deck was also located the IFF type 253 and the controls for the Radar power supplies. These supplies were two 180 volt 500 cps generators in “A” boiler room.

During September 1944 the type 271 Radar was replaced by a new and more efficient type 271. The interrogator 253 antenna rotated with the 271 antenna. A PPI display was installed in the Plot room, but had limited value as the 271 aerial was not continuously rotating.

The US built Radar type SG (Sugar George) was fitted early in 1945. Its power supply and some of SG’s units were fitted below the Pom Pom mounting. The remainder of the displays and antenna controls were fitted in the Plot room. The antenna was fitted high on the foremast. Sweeps could be all round or sector at various speeds, a big improvement on the old hand drives. There was also a small PPI installed on the bridge.

Napier was flotilla leader, and carried two Radio Mechanics. Presumably the “spare” RM would be transferred to a ship in need of service or whose own RM had come to grief.